

Limiting Lead in Lipstick and Other Cosmetics

Although no one really wants to hear they're putting lead into or on their bodies, the fact is that many cosmetics contain low levels of lead. It's good to know because we use a variety of cosmetics daily with low lead levels and they cumulatively add up. "Lead builds in the body over time, and lead-containing lipstick applied several times a day, can add up to significant exposure levels," Mark Mitchell, co-chairman of the Environmental Health Task Force for the National Medical Association, said in the group's statement.

Reports of lead in lipstick date back to the 1990s, and have resurfaced periodically since then. In 2007, the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics tested 33 red lipsticks and found that two-thirds of them contained lead. In Oct. 2007, the FDA began collecting commercial samples of lipsticks available in the U.S. market — 20 shades from 12 brands — to analyze how much lead was present. FDA scientists detected lead in all of the lipstick samples they analyzed, ranging from 0.09 ppm to 3.06 ppm.

Three years later, the agency expanded testing to 400 cosmetic lip products, finding lead levels ranging from 0.026 ppm to 7.19 ppm.

FDA conducted separate surveys for 204 externally applied cosmetics which include: bath products, blushes, body powders, compact powders, deodorants, eye shadows, face paints, foundations, hair products, lotions, mascaras, nail products, shaving preparations, skin care preparations, and tanning preparations, and found lead levels ranging from 6.7 to 9.4 ppm.

Lead is not intentionally put in lipstick or any other cosmetic but many color additives approved by the FDA are mineral-based and therefore contain trace levels of lead that is naturally found in soil, water and air.

Last December, the FDA issued draft guidance to the cosmetics industry on lead as an impurity in lip products, such as lipsticks, and in other cosmetics, such as eye shadows, blushes, compact powders, shampoos, and body lotions. FDA's guidance recommended a maximum level of 10 ppm lead in cosmetic products.

The issuance of the guidance document supported FDA's effort to limit human exposure to lead in cosmetic products by educating new manufacturers who wish to enter the market and encouraging current manufacturers to continue to follow or improve on voluntary good manufacturing practices that limit trace amounts of lead as an impurity. The guidance does not apply to topically applied products that are classified as drugs or to hair dyes that contain lead acetate as an ingredient.

Makeup and other beauty products should help you feel good about yourself. Over time, however, that glow may come at the price of your health. Here are a several ways to protect you and your family:

- ✓ Use fewer cosmetics and reapply them less often. Take an inventory of your cosmetic supply and usage and weed out the items you really don't need. Limit the times per day that you re-apply your beauty products to reduce lead exposure.

- ✓ Removing cosmetics from use by children. Children's bodies are more susceptible to the developmental dangers of lead poisoning. Children under 6 are especially at risk, not only because they're more likely to come into contact with lead via household dust and paint but also because they're still developing and absorb it more easily than adults. Even small amounts can be dangerous because lead builds up in our body over time. The effects of lead are far reaching and can cause brain, nervous system, and kidney damage, learning disabilities, ADD, decreased intelligence, hearing problems, speech and language problems, as well as, poor muscle and bone growth.
- ✓ Be an informed consumer. Read the ingredients on every cosmetic product you own or buy. If the label sounds like your college chemistry class, then you probably don't want that product. These organizations help you identify which cosmetics you will want to avoid and which ones are safe for your health.
The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics - www.safecosmetics.org/
The Environmental Working Group - www.ewg.org/skindeep/
- ✓ Buy cosmetics that have been certified. Organizations have strict standards regarding the safety of cosmetics and personal care products. Purchasing items with their certification seal is a guarantee that the items meet those guidelines. http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/search.php?ewg_verified=products

For additional information, please visit:

<https://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocuments/ucm452623.htm>

https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/productsingredients/products/ucm137224.htm#expanded_survey

<https://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/ProductsIngredients/PotentialContaminants/ucm388820.htm>

If you have any questions or concerns, please call Debb or Jan with the Lead Education and Assistance Office of Lewis and Clark Public Health, at 457-8583, or stop by the office at 306 E. Main St., Room 201, in East Helena.

